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INFO RUEHNR/AMEMBASSY NAIROBI PRIORITY 0020
RUEHDJ/AMEMBASSY DJIBOUTI PRIORITY 0006
RUEHZO/AFRICAN UNION COLLECTIVE
RUCNSOM/SOMALIA COLLECTIVE
RUEHEG/AMEMBASSY CAIRO PRIORITY 1318
RUEHTU/AMEMBASSY TUNIS PRIORITY 0678
RUEHAS/AMEMBASSY ALGIERS PRIORITY 0822
RUEHRB/AMEMBASSY RABAT PRIORITY 0768
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY 0941
RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS PRIORITY 0628
RHEHAAA/NSC WASHINGTON DC
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 TRIPOLI 000918

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SUBJECT: LIBYA: WE ARE AN EFFECTIVE MEDIATOR FOR SOMALIA

REF: A) STATE 123635, B) NET-CENTRIC DIPLOMACY EMAIL DATED 11/19/2008

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CLASSIFIED BY: Chris Stevens, CDA, Embassy Tripoli, Department of State.

REASON: 1.4 (b), (d)

11. (C) Summary: Libyan officials were evasive on whether the GOL had agreed to offer financial support to Somalia's Transitional Federal Government (TFG) - they suggested that Libya would not be in a position to deny "humanitarian assistance" to its "Somali brothers" - during the recent visit to Tripoli of TFG President Abdullahi Yusuf Ahmed. They argued that Libya's strong cultural, religious, and historical ties to Somalia enable it to play a uniquely effective role in mediating Somali affairs, and that Yusuf's approach al-Qadhafi for assistance, to include possibly shifting the venue for negotiations from Djibouti to Tripoli, was consistent with the latter's role as a proven negotiator and wise man on the African continent. End summary.

12. (C) A/DCM delivered reftel demarche on November 25 to Asseid Nuha, Deputy Director of the MFA's Arab Affairs Office, and Idriss Abu Dib, Senior Adviser in the MFA's Arab Affairs Office.

(Note: Abu Dib was Libya's Ambassador to Mogadishu from 2003-2007. End note.) Defending Libya's role in negotiations between Somalia's Alliance for the Re-Liberation of Somalia (ARS) and the TFG, Nuha claimed Libya was the only country that had maintained its embassy there throughout the violence. Libya's special interest in Somalia stemmed from the two countries' shared history of Italian colonial occupation and the fact that Somalia is Arab, Islamic, African and a member of CEN-SAD. Libya has "deep knowledge" of internal Somali affairs by dint of historical ties and its robust official presence there. (Note: We've heard reports that the Libyan mission in Mogadishu numbers several hundred individuals, with various organizational affiliations. End note.)

EVASIVE ON FINANCIAL SUPPORT

13. (C) Nuha was evasive in responding to A/DCM's conveyance of reftel points urging the GOL to not/not extend financial support to President Yusuf. He claimed no direct knowledge of such a request from Yusuf to al-Qadhafi, but stressed that the meeting between the two was at the head-of-state level and suggested

that if financial assistance had been provided, it would not have been inappropriate given Libya's longstanding relationship with Somalia and its efforts to promote political solutions to ongoing violence there. At conversation's end, Nuha circled back to the issue of finances, adding that Libya would not be in a position to deny "humanitarian assistance" and funds for same to the "Somali brothers."

IT IS NATURAL TO HELP OUR ARAB BROTHERS

¶4. (C) According to Nuha, Libya sees TFG President Yusuf as the legally-elected president and legitimate representative of Somalia. It was therefore entirely appropriate that he was received in Tripoli and met with Muammar al-Qadhafi. Arab affairs are tribal and familial and it is "natural" that Libya would want to help its "Arab brothers" in Somalia. Many African leaders have turned to al-Qadhafi for wisdom and counsel - in Chad and Darfur, for example - and the Leader takes his leadership role in Africa seriously. President Yusuf had requested the Leader's help in moving Somali negotiations forward, to include specifically asking that ARS-TFG negotiations be moved from Djibouti to Tripoli. Yusuf extended an invitation through al-Qadhafi for a senior Libyan delegation to visit Mogadishu to assess the situation on the ground and the feasibility of moving talks from Djibouti to Tripoli. (Note: our interlocutors did not indicate whether Libya intended to take Yusuf up on his offer. End note.)

LIBYA WANTS "STABILITY AND PEACE" IN SOMALIA

¶5. (C) The critical point, Nuha emphasized, was that Libya endeavors to achieve "stability and peace" in Somalia. Libya is willing to engage in dialogue with anyone who can help reach that goal; the path by which such success was achieved was inconsequential. Citing his experience in Mogadishu, Abu Dib stressed that all parties had to participate in negotiations - regardless of venue (i.e., Djibouti or Tripoli) - if they were to have a chance of achieving a durable solution. He viewed Yusuf as being relatively weak in Somali politics by dint of the

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fact that he is from Puntland's Darod clan and therefore lacks a base in Mogadishu, where the Hawaye enjoy strong support. Abu Dib and Nuha argued that Libya could be a credible mediator between Hawaye and Darod.

¶6. (C) Comment: This meeting was our first with these interlocutors. Former ambassador to Mogadishu Abu Dib, in particular, was keen to show his extensive knowledge of the problems facing Somalia. Talking at length in near professorial tones, he recounted in impressive detail the history of tribal alliances through the years, and attributed Somalia's persistent political morass to tribal conflict, corruption, and power relationships. He argued that a key problem was the inability of Somalis to think beyond their own interests and those of their clans, a necessary precondition for broader political compromise that addressed national concerns. Their argument that Libya's longstanding involvement in and knowledge of sub-Saharan African affairs justify its mediation in Somalia parallels the GOL's position regarding its efforts in Chad and Darfur, where its track record has been mixed. End comment.
STEVENS